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Report of the Leader of Council Council – 12 July 2016

EU Referendum

Bradford residents voted 54% to 46% to leave Europe. Across West Yorkshire, only Leeds voted narrowly to remain in Europe. I attended a meeting shortly after the vote with other West Yorkshire leaders, the LEP and representatives of the business community from across the region to discuss the significance of the decision and what we could all do to make sure that the region remains in prime position for economic opportunity.

Bradford has the advantage of having extensive global trade links and we will need to capitalise on our outward looking economy to establish the prosperity our district needs.

One thing which has been made clear by the result is that there is a big divide between London and the rest of the country, in particular with the north of England. There should therefore now be renewed impetus to talk seriously about devolving powers and as West Yorkshire leaders we have been proactive in contacting Government after the referendum result to ask for further discussions.

Transport for the North

John Cridland visited Bradford on 1st July. At the meeting we were able to set out our case for why we think Bradford should be a stop on the Northern Powerhouse line (formerly known as HS3) which will cross from Leeds to Manchester. As the city with the youngest population in the country we are projected to grow from 523,000 to 565,000 people by 2024. This provides tremendous economic opportunity for the whole of the north of England, not just Bradford.

Nearly three quarters of the journeys taken between Leeds and Bradford are by car leading to congestion, restriction of economic growth and poor air quality. Now is the time for the Government to confirm its commitment to Transport for the North which will support vital infrastructure projects. We in Bradford will continue to work with partners to make our case.

Wilshaw advice note to Secretary of State for Education mentioning Bradford

Last week Sir Michael Wilshaw, after his visit to Bradford in March, sent a letter to the Secretary of State for Education. This letter largely focussed on the condition of Children's Services in Birmingham. However in this letter he also mentioned his visits to Luton and Bradford and his focus on children

missing from education. His comments were substantially similar to those that appeared in the press in March this year.

After this short initial visit in March, the District Police Commander and Strategic Director of Children's Services were able to have a longer meeting with Ofsted to discuss in detail how we respond when children go missing from school rolls. This provided assurance on a number of points but we have also taken further action to improve our practice in this area further including:

- Establishing a multi-agency education safeguarding hub to bring together the police, social care, health and education. This helps us track all referrals so that we have a more integrated approach to tackling this issue and identifying unregistered schools.
- The police designating an officer to work closely with independent schools so they are aware of their safeguarding duties.
- Every school now has clear information on reporting mechanisms so that they are able to refer issues quickly.

When we asked Ofsted for examples of best practice nationally on this issue, they could not easily be provided, hence why we are establishing our own local solutions. I welcome Children's Scrutiny's oversight on this issue as part of its work programme. It is vital that our systems are robust.

Great Exhibition of the North

This is a great opportunity for the city. However it has required a quick turnaround. The initiative was only announced in April with bids having to be in by 30th June. It follows the intention of Government to stage the Great Exhibition of the North to showcase the creativity, technology and innovation of the north of England. Bradford previously hosted the Great Exhibition in 1904. We understand that 8 places in the north have submitted bids including Bradford.

Bradford's bid includes a strong collaboration with the National Media Museum who would be a major venue for the exhibition. We will know whether Bradford has been shortlisted by the end of July. The final decision will be a ministerial one and is currently due to be taken in late September. If successful the Great Exhibition of the North would run in July and August 2018 and would collaborate with satellites in other northern cities and towns.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER

Councillor Cooke

Thank you for the report as ever. On the item relating to Sir Michael Wilshaw's advice note to the Secretary of State and thank you for setting out that and I know that others have done similar. I am increasingly concerned on two issues relating to this and I hope that the Council and the Leader can take these on board. The first one is that there seems to be an increase and I do not like to use this word too much but on this occasion I think it is appropriate "demonisation" of people who choose to home school implicit in this work and it does concern me considerably that that is done. But more significantly in all of this there seems to be a particular targeting of Muslim parents who choose to home school and the implication in this letter, this evidence free letter shall I have it, from Sir Michael Wilshaw, is that Muslim parents are not simply exercising their right to home school, what they are doing is engaging in some sinister getting together and/or to train their children to be extremists. There is no evidence for that and we really should tell in no uncertain terms Sir Michael Wilshaw and those peddling this agenda that that is simply not true.

Leader – Councillor Hinchcliffe

Thank you Councillor Cooke. Yes those concerns have been made to me on previous occasions and I accept those. I think what I always seek to do is to welcome challenge on Ofsted and on safeguarding children. Everybody in this Chamber and every parent in this district wants to make sure their children are safe no matter what setting they are in and therefore we do have a duty and responsibility to make sure that they are safe and that the processes are in place to maintain that. Sir Michael Wilshaw has a distinct style when he is putting his arguments and obviously he only gave us 45 minutes. I have invited him back to have a further conversation but he has not yet taken me up on that offer but we were able to re-assure Ofsted on a number of points that we were not able to adequately cover in the meeting. I think what makes you think about singling out communities, and I can see that myself, is that obviously if it is to Birmingham, Luton and Bradford and what our argument has been that this does not need a Commissioner just for Bradford. This is a national framework and children in any settings need to be safeguarded no matter where they are in the country. It is not about Birmingham, Bradford and Luton or the communities that live in those so really we are doing what we can at local level to safeguard our children but what we have been clear about with Ofsted is that we expect them to do some national work to look at their national legislation and that means integrating things into the national Ofsted framework, not just in Bradford, Luton and Birmingham. So that is our response on that issue. Home schooling – yes absolutely it is every parent's right to home school their children and I have already had representations from people who are concerned because of the language that Wilshaw uses about their right to do so. Obviously that right is not under threat. I think it will be very interesting to see the Children Scrutiny meeting which will look into those issues and I think some of the Home Schooling people are going to come to that meeting so that they can also air

their views and concerns there. It will be a good opportunity to look at what the processes are in detail and also invite people who can speak up for themselves and their home schooling arrangements and ensure people that those are being held in a responsible setting. Thank you.